exempted the Prince of Arcot from the payment of Motor Vehicles Tax to his car, which is for his personal use. The State Government have also exempted him from the provision of the Arms Act to possess certain Fire Arms.

Violence in North-East

1561. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDIY: Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is no let up in North-East violence;

(b) the number of persons killed by insurgents between April and May, 1998 in Assam; and

(c) the measures taken to solve the insurgency problem?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (c) Certain States in the North East Region have varying degree of militancy and terrorism. It cannot be said that there is an increase in such activities. In Nagaland, there has been a significant decline in violence after the ceasefire in August, 1997. However, 84 persons have been killed by insurgents in April and May 1998 in Assam.

Government has repeatedly expressed readiness to hold talks in order to resolve the issues. Recently on April 15, 1998 the Prime Minister, in his Press Statement at Guwahati, had stated "To all those who have strayed from the paths of togetherness, whether in Assam or other states of the North East, I extend an invitation; come forward; let us discuss; my Government is committed to holding talks, to a restoration of peace; let us do so within the four corners of our Constitution". In addition, steps taken to control the insurgent activities include *inter alia,* deployment of additional units of Central Para Military Forces and the Army, improved coordination and sharing of intelligence, sanction of India Reserve Battalions, modernisation of upgradation of State Police Forces, sanction of Special Central Assistance, declaration of the most seriously affected areas as disturbed areas and notification of the major insurgent groups as unlawful associations. The situation is also kept under watch and is reviewed from time to time for taking appropriate decisions.

Afghan Guerillas in J & K

1562. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMCHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state the action taken to counter Afghan guerillas active in Jammu and Kashmir?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): With local militancy on the wane, Pak sponsored militant outfits have been making efforts to induct more foreign mercenaries including some belonging to Afghanistan to carry out militant activities in J & K. The action taken by the Government to tackle militancy in J & K include sustained anti-terrorists operations by the Police and the security forces, including intensive patrolling on the border, LOC and hinterland, establishing pickets in vulnerable areas, strengthening of State Police/intelligence network and coordination of the security arrangements amongst various agencies. As per State Government, from January 1990 to May 1998, 149 Afghan mercenaries have been killed and 22 arrested in J & K.

Scandal Involving Crores of Rupees in Traffic Signals

1563. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a scandal involving crores of rupees in the city's traffic signals was recently detected by an Expert Committee set up by the police authorities;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and